

**ANY HELP FOR UKRAINE? ROMANIAN-POLISH-UKRAINIAN INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE.
IMPLICATIONS ON EUROPE'S DEPENDENCE ON RUSSIAN FOSSIL FUELS**

Nicolae PĂUN, Ph.D. Professor
Professor J. Monnet Ad Personam
"Bogdan Vodă" University of Cluj-Napoca
E-mail: nicolae.paun54@gmail.com

Anamaria Loredana IANOȘI, Ph.D.
Post - Doctoral researcher
Faculty of European Studies
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, România
E-mail: felderean_anamaria@yahoo.com

Abstract

Sine quo dubium, Europe is currently facing the most difficult situation in the last seventy years. After a pandemic that lasted almost two years and had disastrous consequences both at European and global level, Europe today faces an unimaginable scenario until now, a scenario in which the main characters are Ukraine, in the role of victim, and the Russian Federation in the role of invader. After seventy years of lasting peace, Europe is shaken again by war, fear and insecurity, even on Romania's borders. Of course, Romania did not remain indifferent to the situation of its Ukrainian neighbors, unconditionally supporting them, not only because they are neighbors but also because they share the same European values. Similarly, Poland did not remain indifferent to the drama of its Ukrainian neighbors for the same reasons. This study aims to analyze the international relations between Romania, Poland and Ukraine over the last 30 years (from the collapse of the communist regime in 1989 to the present), in order to extract examples of good practices that today underlie solidarity between those three states with different destinies but with a common past, which makes them support each other in critical situations, especially now that the national sovereignty of Ukraine is constantly threatened by the Russian Federation. The study also analyzes the impact of the European states' dependence on Russian gas and oil in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Keywords: *Romania, Poland, Ukraine, Russian Federation, EU, international relations, war, penalties, energetic crisis.*

J.E.L. Classification: F51; F52; Q48; P33

Introduction

After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, in Central-Eastern Europe, the hope of peace and sustainable development was reborn. Countries in this part of Europe, suffocated by the iron curtain, terror, darkness, fear and distrust, could breathe the air of freedom again.

The Soviet Union, in turn, broke up two years later, at the end of 1991, resulting in the formation of eleven new sovereign States (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldavia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan). They all declared their independence during the following year. The Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) also regained their independence. What remained of the former Soviet Union, became the Russian Federation, which got the bulk of the territory. The collapse of communism (and of the USSR) was considered the end of the cold War. After the fall of the USSR, the political panorama of Europe was fundamentally influenced, after many former members of the Communist Bloc joined NATO and the EU, which brought discontent to the Kremlin. Kremlin's discontent with this new geo-economic, political and military reality has gained more and more ostentatious valences, especially after Vladimir Putin came to power in Russia, on December 31, 1999. His revisionist policy led to the sacrifice of the post-war territorial status quo in 2014 (illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine) and 2022 (invasion of Ukraine).

The "special operations", in fact an undeclared war of aggression, has generated serious violations of international law and human rights, crimes against humanity. All of this destabilized the

value system, which until then was considered thoroughly installed on our continent and not only after the cold War.

Taking into account the above, this study aims to identify the representative aspects of Ukraine's international relations with its neighbors, Romania and Poland, before the current Russian aggression on Ukraine (1), to present and analyze Russia's aggression on Ukraine today (2) and to analyze the international relations of Ukraine, and the positions of Romania and Poland after the beginning of the Russian aggression on the morning of February 24, 2022 (3). The research hypothesis of the study is that most of the important global stakeholders support and encourage Ukraine to resist the Russian invasion, and the neighbors, Romania and Poland support Ukraine, all the more so, as they deeply understand the drama of the Ukrainian people, being located on the border with it. The final part of the study looks at the issue of Europe's dependence on Russian fossil fuels and how they have been transformed by Russia into an economic weapon. The study concludes that Ukraine's unfortunate situation will bring it closer to the two countries in the future, all the more so as Volodymyr Zelensky, the President-in-office of Ukraine signed the EU membership application. Ukraine's example was closely followed by the Republic of Moldova, which was also accepted for accession, while Georgia's application remains in a passage of strengthening democratic reforms for the future.

Regarding the energy crisis, the issues analyzed clearly point to a paradigm shift in Europe's energy supply that is moving toward reducing dependence on the Russian giant, accessing new energy sources such as US liquefied natural gas, massive investments in renewable energy, as well as measures to reduce the consumption of gas and oil throughout Europe, but also an endless blackmail, a real economic war that Russia is conducting against the supply of energy resources of the European Union, as a result of the sanctions decided by Brussels, in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

2. Relations between Ukraine, Romania and Poland before the invasion of the Russian Federation

After the fall of communism, Romania has developed bilateral relations with important stakeholders of the international relations scene, some of which are part of the EU, and the others are about to become Member States of the European project. Next, we will turn our attention to Ukraine and the relations that the country, accused by its invaders of becoming "too Western", has had with Romania and Poland, its neighbors, over the last three decades, with which Ukraine has shared over time multiple common values.

1.1. Ukraine and Romania

Romanian-Ukrainian relations in the last three decades have seen ups and downs, due to tensions over the restitution of territories taken by the USSR and then in Ukraine's possession. However, Romania has taken a stand in solidarity with Ukraine whenever it has faced numerous waves of threats and aggression from the Russian Federation.

Romania was among the first countries to recognize Ukraine as an independent state.

After the establishment of diplomatic relations, there were misunderstandings and lack of trust between the two States. Especially since some politicians, after the communist period, declared that "they do not recognize Ukraine in its current borders, because the Romanian territories taken by the USSR should not be in the possession of this state." However, in 1997, the Treaty on Relations of Good-Neighborliness and Cooperation between Romania and Ukraine was signed, because Romania wanted to join NATO, and good neighborliness was an essential criterion taken into account in the analysis of the integration opportunity. Also, the related Agreement was signed, through which Romania officially recognized, indirectly, that northern Bukovina, southern Bessarabia, Hertsa County, but also Snake Island, are territories that belong to the Ukrainian state. (According to experts, the Snake Island should have belonged to Romania, because "it was fraudulently ceded by the communist regime, which also violated internal laws. The island was fraudulently annexed by the USSR on February 4, 1948, through a simple protocol"). Thus, Romania takes the first steps toward Ukraine, starting from distrust and fear in relation to it, toward an ever closer cooperation and partnership. The complexity of the relations between Romania and Ukraine is indissolubly linked to a large number of topics, among which "the division of the Romanian minority into Romanians and Moldovans, the situation of the Romanian minority in Bukovina and southern Bessarabia, the Romanian language in schools and the one in the religious units, but also of dual citizenship." The current Romanian-Ukrainian relations, at the confluence of European and global regional turbulence, are the result of developments and events

post-2014, which include a constant commitment of Romania and a very interesting change of tone regarding Ukraine. Romania has been constant in defending the provisions of international law, has supported the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine,” condemning the annexation of Crimea and the military aggression that followed in eastern Ukraine.

Romania supported Ukraine in avoiding the occupation of Odessa region, supported it with non-lethal information and equipment in Donbas and “coordinated the NATO Cyber Security Group, which is still one of the concrete participations in strengthening Ukraine’s defense”. The Romanian minority in Ukraine is faithful to the Ukrainian state, and Ukraine initially showed (in the 90s) a salutary openness, allowing schools with teaching in the Romanian language. However, after the events of 2014, Ukraine has wrongly assessed the fact that it can strengthen its national identity by systematically adopting laws that affected all minorities, including the Romanian one: Education Law 2017 (education exclusively in the state language), Citizenship Law (dual citizenship, prohibited by law in Ukraine, but treated with lightness until today). It seems that Ukraine has understood, however, that it is in its interest that the Romanian minority be loyal to it, and that it is in its interest to have very good bilateral relations with the state from which this minority comes. Romania, in its turn, needs allies in the region. Romania maintains close relations with Ukraine and the other Black Sea coastal States and all its neighbors. Moreover, in the case of Romanian-Ukrainian relations, the Ukrainian minority in Romania is a necessary bridge between the two States. It is represented in Parliament by a Member with an intense cultural, diplomatic and economic activity. We also remind that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Bucharest, mainly, has facilitated numerous high-level, but also regional, mutual visits between the two countries.

1.2. Relations between Ukraine and Poland

As with Romania, Ukrainian-Polish bilateral relations have been tense and difficult over the past three decades. In this regard, Polish President Andrzej Duda declared in 2021 that Polish-Ukrainian relations are difficult, but he assured that he intends to “solve this problem”. The Warsaw leader considered “enormous” the harm that Ukrainians had “done to his country” in the past: “The murder of Volin, the murder of Poles and the entire case related to Second World War and after the Second World War. The harm that the Ukrainians caused on us was enormous, it is difficult to describe,” outlined the president of Poland. On the other hand, Andrzej Duda did not rule out the fact that Ukraine also has various claims against Poland. “Therefore this is a mutual problem. We have to work it out. Just as this problem was solved, at some point, with Germany and this friendship and cooperation were possible, despite the fact that history is never forgotten, so as not to repeat itself. We will do the same in this case (in the relationship with Ukraine). In this context, we must not forget that we are living in the present and that the future is ahead of us.” Therefore, relations between Poland and Ukraine, close by their security concerns because of Russia, remain a tribute to a historical past still painful for Poland, which Poland is trying to leave behind for the sake of a better future for both countries, relying on a strategic partnership advantageous for each state, maintaining a constructive attitude in their relations, reaching the level where, in 2017, the head of Polish diplomacy, Witold Waszczykowski, declared that: “Political, military or economic relations between Ukraine and Poland operate without obstacles,” especially after the events in Ukraine in 2014.

Thus, thanks to a common enemy, perceived as extremely dangerous, namely the Russian Federation, three former communist States, which shared a common past but also had multiple historical differences regarding the territories and human lives lost in Second World War, also under the supremacy of the Soviet oppressor, gradually decided to shake hands, forget the past and support each other in order to preserve sovereignty in the face of the common enemy that poses a threat not only to Ukraine but also to Romania and Poland, to Europe and to the whole world.

2. Ukraine under siege. Invasion of the Russian Federation of the Ukrainian state on February 24, 2022

On the morning of February 24, 2022, the international press was filled with headlines exclaiming: “War in Ukraine. Powerful explosions in the center of Kiev. The Ukrainian army is resisting Russian troops.” In Russia, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced, on the morning of the same fateful day, a special military operation in Ukraine. Immediately after his announcement, several explosions began to be heard in the Ukrainian cities of Kiev, Kharkov or Odessa. Russia’s

military operation is complex and is in full swing. The troops of the Russian Federation are attacking from the north, south and east and are also heading towards the capital Kyiv. Ukrainian forces are fighting on several fronts, but have lost control of several military bases and airports and of the Chernobyl area. And the West has announced tough sanctions for Russia, condemning the attack on Ukraine. This is how the Kremlin's special operation in Ukraine began, about which he declared, on the day of the invasion, that "Ukraine is our historic territory" and that all analyses have shown that a confrontation of Russia with these forces (Ukrainian forces hostile to the Kremlin) is inevitable. Thus, after on February 21, 2022, following extreme tensions, President Vladimir Putin decided to recognize as independent entities the non-government-controlled areas of the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts (administrative regions) of Ukraine and to send Russian troops to these areas, on the morning of February 24 at 5.30 (Moscow time) he ordered the start of the special operation in Donbas and asked the Ukrainian army to lay down their weapons.

Putin threatens that the Russian Federation is one of the greatest military powers in the world, which means that in the case of a direct attack on it, the opponent will be taken down and destroyed. Putin invoked the most diverse reasons for the aggression: NATO expansion in the East, Ukraine's official request to be a NATO Member country, Ukraine's westernization tendencies, the problem of the Russian minority, etc.

The Russian aggression in Ukraine, although it took some by surprise, did not come out of nowhere. It relates to the 2014 Euromaidan Orange uprising/Revolution, and the subsequent annexation of Crimea. Among the clues on what was going to befall Ukraine, we recall those of 2008, at the NATO Summit in Bucharest, when Vladimir Putin, addressing George Bush Junior, said rhetorically: "What, George, do you not see? Ukraine is an artificial state."

The prospect of an ongoing war in Ukraine has major implications for countries such as Poland or Romania. At the time of writing this article, Ukraine is close to the 190th day of war. Mariupol, Lugansk, Donbas, Zaporizhzhia have become martyr cities, assumed by the entire planet. Ukrainians continue to resist in the South, in the East, in Kharkov, on the Dnieper, etc.

Romania and Poland offer unconditional aid to Ukrainian refugees. Europe is imposing tough sanctions on Moscow. The US provides a steady stream of military aid, projected to exceed \$50 billion. At this moment, all eyes are on Ukraine.

The Ukrainians celebrated Independence Day, 6 months after the start of this terrible drama, quietly, with dignity and heroism, declaring that they will make every effort to take their country back. After the August 24, 2022 attack on Chaplyne train station (145 km from Donetsk), which left 22 dead and about 50 civilians injured, President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his midnight message: "It is almost night, our main day, Independence Day of Ukraine, is coming to an end. But our independence does not end and will never end. And there will be the 32nd day of independence, and the 33rd, and the following, for as long as there will be time on Earth. Ukraine will live forever [...] There are no bombs that can wipe out freedom, and there will never be projectiles to defeat the will of the people who believe in themselves."

The EU strongly condemns Putin's decision to recognize areas not controlled by the government of Donetsk and Luhansk and to invade Ukraine: "It is not only Ukraine that is under attack. International law, the rules-based international order, democracy and human dignity are also under attack. This is geopolitical terrorism, simply" (Charles Michel, President of the European Council, March 1, 2022). And the most solidary statements made by EU leaders, Ukraine will certainly remain in history: "Russia bears full responsibility for this act of aggression and for all the destruction and loss of life it will cause. It will be held accountable for its actions.", "The use of force and coercion to change borders has no place in the 21st century. Tensions and conflicts should be resolved exclusively through dialogue and diplomacy," "Ukraine is part of our European family."

2. Paradigm shift. Strengthening of relations between Ukraine, Romania and Poland following the Russian invasion of Ukraine

Starting February 27, 2022, the Romanian Government, understanding that the atrocities on Ukraine are far from coming to an end, decided to support the Ukrainian state with a military aid worth 2 million euros, consisting of helmets, bullet-proof vests and ammunition. The government decided to send a second tranche of aid to Ukraine, consisting of fuel, bullet-proof vests, helmets, ammunition and military equipment, as well as food, water and medicine, totaling 3 million euros. At the same time, the Government announced its readiness to take over Ukrainian wounded people and include them into the health network of Romania. Romania has been involved in the humanitarian crisis that Ukraine is going through. Since the onset of the crisis, until 20.03.2022, 24.00:00, 500,747 Ukrainian citizens have entered Romania, according to the Border Police. By the end of June 2022, the figures had exceeded 1 million refugees.

For those who decided to stay, the Romanian Government launched a package of solutions to ensure the best possible living conditions for Ukrainians: access to education, housing, employment and social assistance.

The figures of the humanitarian drama in Ukraine are unfortunately increasing exponentially from day to day, reaching about 10 million refugees, in UN records, in various countries. We have a special emphasis for Poland. Oktawian Milewski said: "Yesterday we woke up in a whole new world. This applies to all Europeans, all European States, whether they are NATO members and of the EU or not. Minus Russia. In Poland yesterday was the Zero Day of the new World. Of an extremely dangerous and uncertain world. Of a world that Poland has seen in the past, at home, when imperial Russia or Nazi Germany came to conquer it, to annihilate its pride in being itself. And this time, Poland sees this dark world enveloping the home of one of the closest peoples culturally and linguistically, Ukraine." All the unconditional support offered to Ukraine by the two neighboring States clearly points to a paradigm shift in bilateral relations in this triumvirate, which the Ukrainian tragedy has united and led them to put aside past misunderstandings for a better common future, which can exist only by defeating the common enemy: Russia, which has now become a global enemy.

A Russian-EU economic war? The invasion and the European energy crisis

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has further darkened the prospects for global growth, with the European economy facing a serious setback, given trade, investment and financial ties with the two warring countries. Now Europe is suffering a partial disruption of natural gas exports from Russia, the world's largest energy supplier.

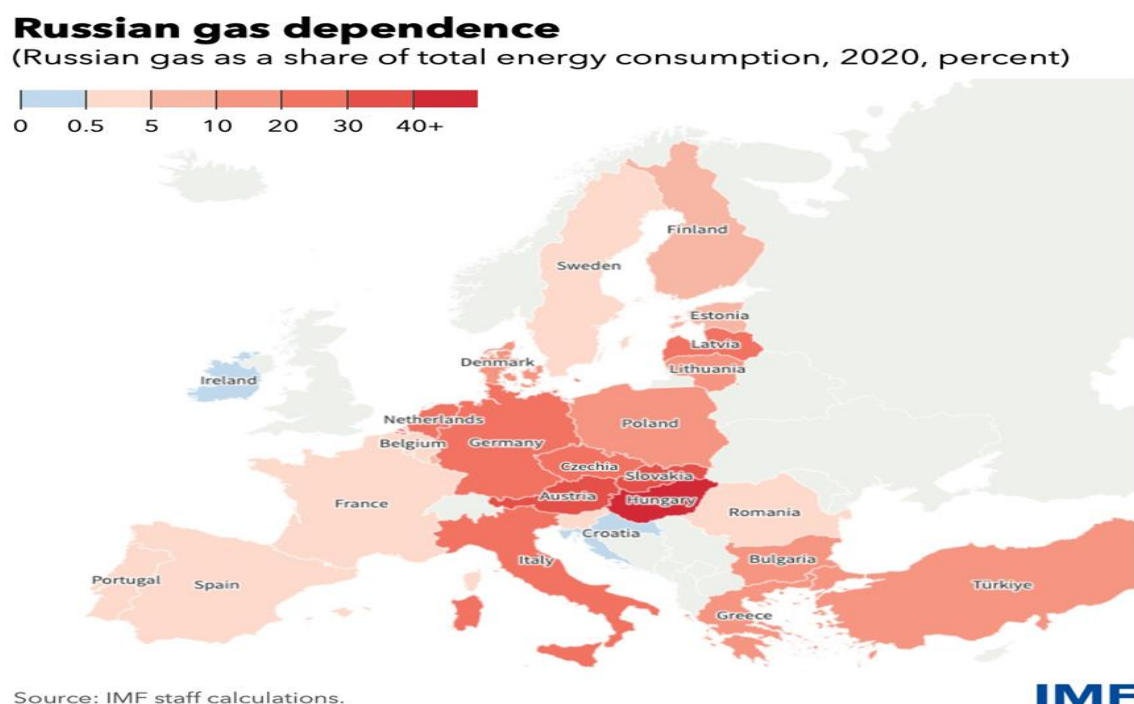
The prospect of an unprecedented total shutdown of Russian gas and oil is fuelling concerns over gas shortages, high prices and economic impact. While policymakers are moving fast, they still lack a plan to manage and minimize the impact of the gas stop on Europe.

Three new International Monetary Fund (IMF) working papers examine these important issues. They examine:

- How fragmented markets and price increases can aggravate the impact.
- The role of the global liquefied natural gas market in moderating results and
- How such factors could play an important role in Germany, Europe's largest economy.

Thus, research conducted at the IMF shows that in some of the most affected countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Hungary, the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic, there is a risk of a shortage of up to 40% of gas consumption and the gross domestic product falling by up to 6%. However, according to the IMF, the impact could be mitigated by securing alternative supplies and energy sources, alleviating infrastructure bottlenecks, encouraging energy savings while protecting vulnerable households and expanding solidarity agreements to share gas between countries. Dependence on Russia for gas and other energy sources varies greatly depending on the country. European infrastructure and global supply have so far faced a 60% drop in Russian gas supplies since June 2021. Total gas consumption in the first quarter decreased by 9% compared to the previous year in 2020, and alternative supplies are prepared for being in use, especially of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in global markets.

Figure 1. Dependence of the European States on Russian gas. Year 2020



Source: *The International Monetary Fund*, <https://blogs.imf.org/2022/07/19/how-a-russian-natural-gas-cutoff-could-weigh-on-europes-economies/#>

Research by IMF experts suggests that a reduction of up to 70% of Russian gas could be managed in the short term through alternative sources of supply and energy.

This explains why some countries managed to unilaterally stop Russian imports. However, diversification would be much more difficult if the supply of Russian gas and oil to European States is completely stopped. Bottlenecks could reduce the ability to redirect gas to Europe due to insufficient import capacity or transport constraints. These factors could lead to the inability to cover a percentage of 15% to 40% of the annual consumption in some Central and Eastern European countries, with the economic impact on these countries being drastic.

In the study, “How a Russian Natural Gas Cutoff Could Weigh on Europe’s”, IMF researchers assess the economic impact of the disruption of Russian gas supplies in two ways.

- One is an integrated market approach that assumes that gas can get where it is needed and prices adjust.
- Another is a fragmented market approach, which is best used when gas cannot get where it is needed, no matter how much prices rise. However, the estimate is complicated by the fact that the blow to the European economy is already taking place.

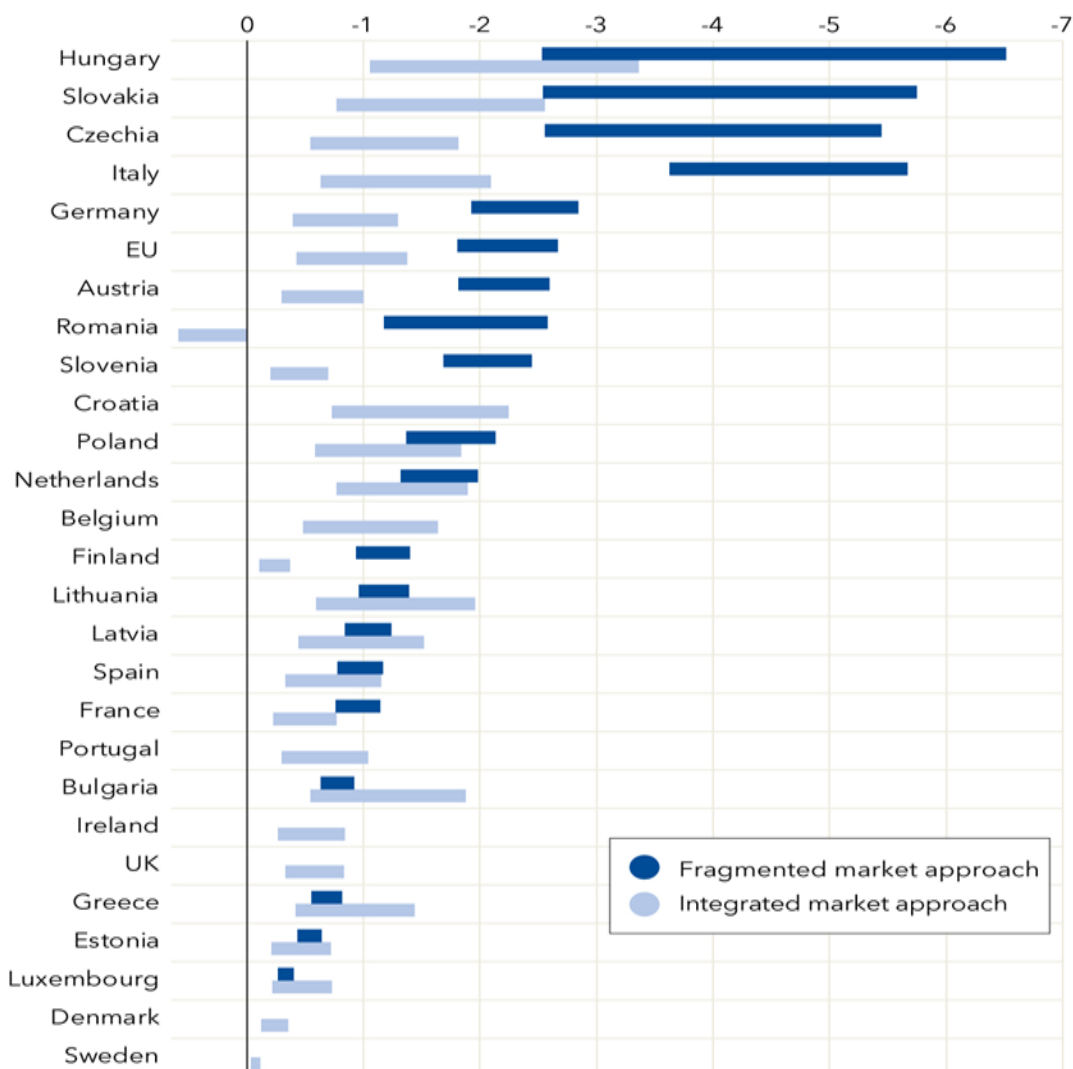
Using the integrated market approach - as the market remains - to estimate the direct impact to date suggests that it may have been a 0.2% reduction in the EU's economic activity in the first half of 2022. When considering a complete disruption of Russian gas in mid-July, we are focusing on the impact relative to a baseline of no supply interruptions this year. This simplifies the estimate and makes it comparable to other economic research. This results in a wide range of impact estimates over the next 12 months. Reflecting the unprecedented nature of a complete disruption of Russian gas, the correct modeling assumptions are very uncertain and vary from country to country.

If EU markets remain integrated both internally and with the rest of the world, our integrated market approach suggests that the global LNG market would help cushion the economic impact. This is because low consumption is distributed in all countries connected to the global market. At the extreme, assuming there is no support for LNG, the impact is amplified: rising gas prices should work by decreasing consumption in the EU alone.

Figure 2: Economic losses experienced by European countries in the event of total disruption of their gas supply from Russia (percentage of GDP)

Output losses

A Russian gas supply shut-off has varying impacts across Europe.
(percent of GDP)



Source: IMF staff estimates.

IMF

Source: The International Monetary Fund, <https://blogs.imf.org/2022/07/19/how-a-russian-natural-gas-cutoff-could-weigh-on-europes-economies/#>

If physical constraints hamper gas flows, the fragmented market approach suggests that the negative impact on economic output would be particularly significant, up to 6% for some countries in Central and Eastern Europe, where the intensity of use of Russian gas is high and alternative supplies are small (Hungary, Slovak Republic and Czech Republic). Italy would also face a negative impact due to its high reliance on gas in the production of electricity.

The effects on Austria and Germany would be less severe but still significant, depending on the availability of alternative sources and the ability to reduce household gas consumption. The economic impact would be moderate, possibly below 1%, for other countries with sufficient access to international LNG markets.

According to economist Artem Kochnev of the renowned Institute of International Economic studies in Vienna (WIIW), the main alternative to Russian gas in the short and medium term is liquefied

natural gas (LNG), mainly from the US, but most of the necessary regasification facilities are in the western part of the EU. Thus, while Spain has seven regasification stations, many of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including Germany, do not and still do not build them, because they receive Russian gas mainly through pipelines. The situation in the different countries of the region is also very different.

In **Austria**, it is estimated that 80% of the imported gas comes from Russia, although some of it is sent to other markets in the region. The industry consumes 40% of this gas, 30% is consumed by power plants, 20% by homes, for hot water and heating, and 10% by public transport. The Alpine country is less exposed in terms of oil imports, with a share of Russian imports of 25%. 87% of the natural gas imported by the **Czech Republic** is of Russian origin, while in the case of oil the share reaches 50%. As a precautionary measure, the country has decided to increase its gas reserves by 200 million cubic meters.

Neighbouring **Slovakia**, which borders Ukraine, receives 100% of its natural gas and oil needs from Russia, while the two Russian-built nuclear plants rely on Russian Federation technology and uranium supplies.

Almost all energy imports in **Hungary**, which account for 70% of consumption, currently come from Russia. On the other hand, Budapest turned to the state nuclear company Rosatom to expand its only nuclear power plant.

Bulgaria was for decades the closest and most loyal country in Southeast Europe to the Soviet Union, often called the 15th soviet republic. It is completely dependent on energy imports. According to local analysts, up to 90% of its oil and gas consumption comes from Russia. The main oil refinery is owned by the Russian consortium Lukoil, which covers 60% of the fuel needs. In addition, the only nuclear power plant in the country (Kozloduy) is Russian-built and is completely dependent on nuclear fuel imported from Russia.

Bulgaria and **Poland** were notified on 27.04.2022 that they would no longer receive gas from Russia, the reason for the dispute being Poland's refusal to pay Gazprom bank in rubles for gas deliveries, as Russia demands. The contracts provide for payments exclusively in euros or US dollars. In this context, Poland announced that it has the necessary gas reserves and sources of supply to protect its security, and Bulgaria announced that it has taken measures to supply gas from other sources.

Croatia is one of the least dependent countries on Russia for energy imports. Only 22% of the natural gas consumed by the Balkan country comes from Russia.

Serbia is a historic ally of Russia and has been negotiating its entry into the EU for years. 85% of the natural gas consumed is imported from Russia. As for oil, Serbia must import almost 80% of its needs and here it is completely dependent on purchases from Russia.

Romania, a neighboring state of Ukraine, is the second largest oil and gas producer in the EU and, therefore, the country in the region least dependent on Russian energy. It imports 25% of the natural gas it consumes, which comes entirely from Russia, while it buys 70% of the oil it needs from abroad, of which 40% comes from Russia.

Romania has large quantities of untapped natural gas in the Black Sea and the ability to also produce gas from clay. Local analysts, however, believe that the lack of strategic vision and legal uncertainty explain why these reserves, which would allow it to be energy independent and export to other countries, have not been exploited so far.

With about 17% of its supply coming from Russia, **France** is less dependent on Russian gas than some of its neighbors. So, according to the government's announcement in Paris on 10.07.2022, France is preparing to cut off all Russian gas supplies, with French Finance Minister, Bruno Le Maire, considering this the most likely scenario for France.

He explained that the first line of defense is to reduce consumption by households and companies, then building a new infrastructure, such as a floating installation for the regasification of liquid natural gas supplies from abroad.

The most affected state by the dependence on Russian gas and oil is by far **Germany**. Germany is in an ungrateful situation regarding the crisis in Ukraine, because it imports a large amount of gas from Russia through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline.

According to the Federal Network Agency, about 55% of imported gas currently comes from Russia, so the dependence is particularly high compared to other European countries.

Germany's gas reserves have also fallen below 30% of its storage capacity. For this reason, increasing imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) are also being discussed in Berlin.

Following Europe's dependence on Russian gas and oil in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which turned these two natural resources into economic weapons, on 22.07.2022 the European Commission (EC) proposed "a plan to reduce gas demand, to prepare the EU in the event of gas supply disruptions." The plan would require all Member States to achieve a 15% reduction in gas demand between August 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, so that **energy saved in summer becomes energy available for winter**.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU has also set out to reduce gas imports from Russia by 66% in 2022 and eliminate them completely by 2030. The Commission adopted the **REPowerEU** Plan with the aim of ending the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels as soon as possible. The REPowerEU plan sets out measures on the diversification of energy suppliers, energy savings and energy efficiency, as well as an accelerated introduction of energy from renewable sources. The EU has also adopted new legislation requiring underground gas reserves in the EU to be filled to 80% of capacity by 1.11.2022 to ensure supplies for the coming winter. In this context, the Commission has carried out an in-depth review of the national preparedness plans to deal with any major supply disruptions.

In order to achieve its objective of becoming independent of Russian fossil fuels, the EU is considering the alternative of liquefied natural gas. **The United States of America** is one of the largest natural gas producers and LNG exporter in the world with which the EU is already in negotiations. Germany would not directly benefit from the new LNG alternative as it does not have related terminals for liquefied gas. Other LNG producers that the EU is considering in order to limit dependence on Russia are: **Qatar, Algeria, Nigeria and Azerbaijan**

Preliminary conclusions

To the essential question: "If Ukraine has received/receives help in the fight against the Russian aggressor?" the answer is yes. Ukraine has received help from all major stakeholders on the scene of international relations in military equipment, supplies, medical equipment and in welcoming Ukrainian refugees who have fled the war. In this context, Romania and Poland stand out for their solidarity with Ukraine and they leave behind the differences they had in the past with Ukraine related to the territories and human lives lost in the Second War. Both countries support the neighboring state in the fight against the common aggressor. But has Ukraine received all the help it needed to cope with the Russian invasion? Although the mobilization in support of Ukraine has been unprecedented in modern history, the aid to Ukrainians is not aimed at direct involvement in the conflict, a prospect that could trigger the start of World War III. States are focused on supporting Ukraine in an indirect way by providing defensive weapons and necessary advice for its resistance or, in the light of the last days, for a counter-offensive necessary for the recovery of the national territory.

In terms of the energy crisis, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, Europe's main gas supplier, has brought already high energy prices to record levels and led the EU to commit to reducing Russian gas consumption, by increasing imports from other countries/or to expedite the programs for the stimulation of renewable energy. Despite the unexpected increase in LNG supplies from the United States, the EU is still in a precarious position on the verge of winter when gas consumption is high, as Russia continues to threaten to reduce or even stop gas deliveries. The EU has urged Member States to reduce gas consumption by 15% by March 2023, as an emergency measure. The President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, also announced a plan to form a working group to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian fossil fuels, all of these measures being concrete steps to eliminate the dependence of European villages on Russia by 2030 and to no longer allow the transformation of natural resources into weapons of political and economic blackmail, in the context of the current conflict. Six months after the Russian aggression started, Ukraine heroically resists the attacks. The President and the Ukrainian people are sending heroic, emotional messages to the whole world: "Russia has drowned Ukraine in tears and blood, but Ukraine will win. There will be new cities, there will be new dreams, there will be a new story. Yes, Ukraine was beautiful, but now it will become wonderful" (President Volodymyr Zelensky's speech on the 27th day of the war).

And what we must keep alive in our memory, regardless of the outcome, which is far too early to predict, is that Ukrainian soldiers are not only fighting for Ukraine, but are fighting for the whole of Europe.

Bibliography

1. Andrei C. "A întârziat România ajutorul militar pentru Ucraina? Ministrul apărării: Sunt discuții pentru o a doua tranșă", in Europa liberă. România, 1 March 2022. Available here: <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/romania-ajutorul-militar-pentru-ucraina/31728709.html>.
2. Astrov V., Ghodsi M., Grieveson R., Holzner M., Kochnev A., Landesmann M., Pindyuk O., Stehrer R., Tverdostup M., Bykova A., "Russia's invasion of Ukraine: assessment of the humanitarian, economic, and financial impact in the short and medium term" in International Economics and Economic Policy, Vol. 19, 23 June 2022, pp.331-381, Available here: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10368-022-00546-5>.
3. Cioculescu Ș. F., "De la neîncredere și teamă la cooperarea și parteneriat. România și Ucraina după Euromaidan și anexarea Crimeei de către Rusia", in Monitor Strategic, no. 1-2/2015, Bucharest, pp.16-28.
4. Chifu I. "Relațiile româno-ucrainene în epoca nevoii Parteneriatului Strategic", in Polis Magazine vol. VI, no. 4, November 2018, Bucharest, pp. 17-32.
5. Cochino A., "Avertismentul unei experte: România și Polonia ar putea fi în curând nevoite să apere frontiera NATO și a UE. Trebuie să se adapteze la această realitate", in Libertatea, 21 February 2022, Available here: <http://nrcu.gov.ua/ro/news.html?newsID=65672>.
6. Crenganiș A.-M., "Relațiile România-Ucraina - o arheologie necesară", in Asociația Casa Mării Negre. Studii de Geopolitică, 2022, Available here: <https://www.casamariinegre.ro/studii/geopolitica/135/relatiile-romania-ucraina-o-arheologie-necesara>.
7. Flanagan M., Kammer A., Pescatori A., Stuermer M., "How a Russian Natural Gas Cutoff Could Weigh on Europe's Economies" in International Monetary Fund. Insights & Analysis on Economics & Finance, 19 July 2022, Available here: <https://blogs.imf.org/2022/07/19/how-a-russian-natural-gas-cutoff-could-weigh-on-europes-economies/>.
8. Hotnews.ro, "Care sunt cele mai dependente state din Europa Centrală și de Est de gazul rusesc - EFE: România, cea mai puțin dependentă", in Hotnews, 15 March 2022, Available here: <https://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-energie-25434554-care-sunt-cele-mai-dependente-state-din-europa-centrala-est-gazul-rusesc-efe-romania-cea-mai-putin-dependenta.htm>.
9. Memorandum, "Meeting of Chancellor Angela Merkel and Presedint Dimitri Medmedev on 4-5 June 2010", Available here: <https://russiaeu.ru/sites/default/files/user/files/2010-06-05-meseberg-memorandum.pdf>.
10. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Bilateral relations, Ukraine", Available here: <https://www.mae.ro/bilateral-relations/1734>.
11. Milewski O., "Imperiul rus lovește din nou. Polonia este trup și suflet alături de Ucraina", in RFI, 25 February 2022, Available here: <https://www.rfi.ro/politica-142849-imperiul-rus-loveste-polonia-trup-suflet-alaturi-ucraina>.
12. Moșneagu, I. "Iată cum arată declarația de război a lui Vladimir Putin la adresa Ucrainei. Discursul integral", in Mediafax, 24 February 2022, Available here: <https://www.mediafax.ro/externe/iata-cum-arata-declaratia-de-razboi-a-lui-vladimir-putin-la-adresa-ucrainei-discursul-integral-20546917>.
13. Nord Stream Secure Gas Supply for Europe, "Direct Connection Between Russia and the EU", Available here: <https://www.nord-stream.com/the-project/pipeline/>.
14. Radio Romania "President Andrzej Duda considers relations between Ukraine and Poland to be difficult from a historical point of view", 25 August 2021. Available here: <https://www.rador.ro/2021/08/25/presedintele-andrzej-duda-considera-relatiile-dintre-ucraina-si-polonia-ca-fiind-dificile-din-punct-de-vedere-istoric/>.
15. Romanian Border Police, "Border traffic on March 20, 2022". Available here: <https://www.politiadefrontiera.ro/ro/main/i-trafficul-la-frontiera-in-data-de-20-martie-2022-28463.html>.

16. Reuters, "France prepares for total cutoff of Russian gas", in Reuters, 10 March 2022, Available here: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russian-gas-cutoff-most-likely-scenario-french-finance-minister-2022-07-10/>.
17. „Text of Putin’s speech at NATO Summit”, in The New York Times, Available here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/05/world/europe/05nato.html>.
18. The European Commission, "The Commission is proposing a plan to reduce gas demand to prepare the EU in the event of gas supply disruptions", 22 July 2022. Available here: https://romania.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/comisia-propune-un-plan-de-reducere-cererii-de-gaze-pentru-pregati-ue-eventualitatea-interruperilor-2022-07-20_ro
19. The European Council, "The EU’s response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine", Available here: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/eu-response-ukraine-invasion/>.
20. The National Broadcasting Company of Ukraine, "Relations between Poland and Ukraine in most areas are developing normally", 4 December 2017. Available here: <http://nrcu.gov.ua/ro/news.html?newsID=65672>.
21. Țaga M., "Zelenski, după atacul rusesc care a ucis 22 de oameni: Nu există bombe care să poată șterge libertatea", in Adevărul, 25 August 2022, p.1, Available here: <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-externe/europa/zelenski-dupa-atacul-rusesc-care-a-ucis-22-de-2200268.html>.